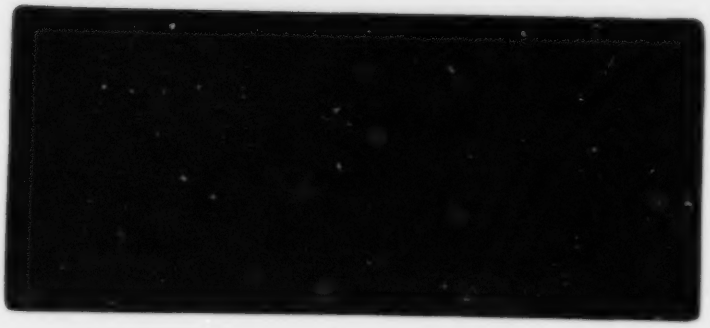


New Brunswick

Advanced Education and Training

Planning Services

Nouveau-Brunswick

Enseignement supérieur et formation

Services de planification

STUDENTS OF NEW BRUNSWICK COMMUNITY COLLEGES - 2 REPORTS

91-02782/

STUDENTS OF

NEW BRUNSWICK COMMUNITY COLLEGES

TWO (2) REPORTS

PART TIME STUDENTS

"Identifying the Part Time Training Students" . . . . Report 1

FULL TIME STUDENTS

"Student Retention and Attrition" . . . . . Report 2

Department of Advanced Education and Training

Reports prepared by:

Pamela Easterbrook-Nadeau
Senior Policy Analyst
October 1990

IDENTIFYING THE PART-TIME TRAINING STUDENTS

FOREWORD

We are told that members of the post war baby boom, or "Big Generation" are avid consumers of education. Members of this generation, aged today from 24-44 years of age, are no longer school, nor college aged. Instead, they are in their most productive years. Are they still avid consumers of education and training?

The growing numbers of part time enrolments in our community colleges would suggest they are. However, enrolment numbers are the only information we have about our part time clients, now numbering in excess of thirty-two thousand (32,000) each year.

The following gives the results of a random sample survey of part-time students, taken in the spring of 1990. The first information it provides is demographic, enabling us to identify our clients (are they in fact the baby boomers?). Secondly, it relates impressions these clients offered about their training experiences with us. And third, it answers more questions the Department would have: would they take more courses with us, and why?

All of this information is valuable fodder for those interested in preparing proactive part time training strategies.

Pamela Easterbrook-Nadeau
Planning Services

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A random sample survey of the Department's part time client population was conducted in the spring of 1990. The study aimed to identify these part time clients, to guage their opinions about our training services, and to probe their future training expectations. Statistically speaking, the sample (n=496) fairly represented these more than thirty two thousand clients.

CONCLUSION

The study revealed a dynamic group of clients who have clear reasons for their training. They are of the most active working age and if they do not have jobs, are actively looking for one. There is reason to think that their training course is part of the job search strategy. They appear to be very pleased with their training, and while many claim they are taking training for personal interest now, they will be taking courses in the near future for professional development. The gender difference in this regard is interesting, suggesting that women take their early training experiences for personal interest, but will soon move into training for professional development.

All clients were very pleased with their training, with the general interest clients being the most satisfied overall, the 2nd language and correspondence course clients the least. When asked about training plans over the very near future, the overwhelming majority (91%) said it was likely, and they would take the course for professional development reasons.

This is evidence of a ready client group, good news for the Department. The Department is cautioned however to resist being lulled into security by the halo effect evident in the study. It is true that New Brunswick adults may be poised for part time study and may be relatively pleased with what the Department provides. However, the Department is presently operating in a marketplace with very little competition, a situation which could change at any time. So if it decides to seriously court the part time clientele, its strategic plan should include ways of improving the weak areas identified by the study.

HIGHLIGHTS

Identity of the clients

- three quarters of the part time clients take night school courses, one fifth are "miscellaneous" or contract training clients, the rest (5%) are correspondence course clients;

- night school and miscellaneous enrolments are growing, correspondence enrolments are stable;

- two thirds of the clients are women, one third men, most (86%) are between twenty and fifty years of age, three quarters of the correspondence clients are under thirty, and so are one third of the credit course clients;

- the francophone clients are over represented, they are mostly (82%) women 20-49 years of age; the anglophone clients are more equally represented between the genders, and have a wider age distribution;

- the clients tend to be more active in the labour force than N.B. adults in general, the former group with many more in the "unemployed" compared with the "not looking for work" category; likewise the men are more labour force active as are the miscellaneous, the night school business and the 2nd language training clients;

- the distance to the course is not a problem for the majority of the clients; however, women experience a problem at generally shorter distances, and the clients for contract training have farther to travel, which poses a problem for one in six of them;

Needs Met by Current Training Course

- the majority of the clients appear to have decided upon the course, then actively sought it out; the vast majority of clients felt there was sufficient variety in course offerings, the only exception was the clients taking credit courses, one in seven of whom were unsatisfied with the variety of offerings;

- despite the course actually taken, the most common reason cited for taking the course was "personal interest", followed closely by "professional development"; women had the greater tendency to cite "personal interest";

Evaluations of the Present Course

- there was a clear "halo effect" in the evaluations suggesting that the clients, especially the general interest course clients, are very happy with their courses; the quality of instruction is our real strength, the meeting of clients' expectations the weakest point;

- the correspondence course clients and the 2nd language students offered only moderate reviews for facilities, equipment, course duration and overall meeting of expectations;

- many comments were volunteered, the most common expressing dissatisfaction with the availability of textbooks, the short duration of the academic upgrading and 2nd languages courses, and poor quality course material and support systems for clients taking correspondence courses

Future Training Plans

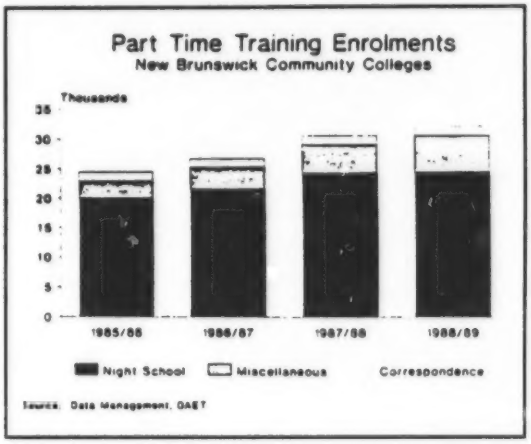
- the overwhelming majority of clients (91%) are confident they will take another training course with us over the next two years;

- "professional development" is highlighted as the main reason for taking another course, followed by "personal interest"; and, while the night school format is still the most popular option, it is losing some popularity as many would instead be interested in daytime courses

IDENTIFYING THE PART TIME TRAINING STUDENTS

INTRODUCTION

Five years ago, almost twenty-five thousand New Brunswick adults took a part time training course (night school, correspondence or short term contract training) through our Community Colleges. By last year that number had risen to exceed thirty-two thousand. And, in every one of these five years colleges trained twice as many part time as fulltime students. That is a wide reach for the Department.



Why the growing interest in part time training? What needs are being met by this training? What are clients' future plans for training? When the Department can answer such questions it can begin to anticipate the part time training needs of New Brunswickers. Then, it will be able to **develop a long term part time training strategy.**

This report gives the results of a random survey of part time students, conducted in the Spring of 1990. Respondents were asked about themselves, their reasons for taking the courses, their satisfaction with the courses, and their future training plans. **The report will paint a profile of the part time clientele, their present and future training needs.**

DESIGN

The survey was a random sample survey. A "cluster" sampling technique was used. This meant that from each part time training category, classes were randomly chosen, and all members of the class were surveyed. There was minimal refusal (perhaps one or two individuals). Instead, the main sampling difficulty was low attendance in the academic upgrading classes.

A mailout was also necessary for five per cent (n=25) of the needed sample was from the correspondence course clients. In this case, twice as many questionnaires were mailed out as needed. The mail-out response rate was 58%.

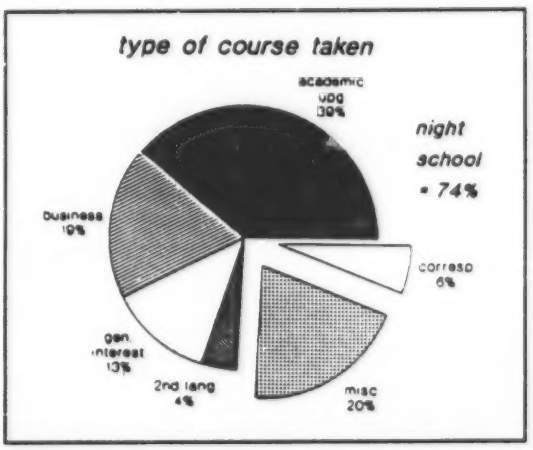
For the entire survey, five hundred respondents were sought: four less than this were received (n=496). Classes in each of six (6) Community Colleges participated in the survey.

As a result of these methods, the sample fairly represents the part time student population, according to the 1988/89 figures on registration by category. And data will be accurate for the part time student population within five percent, nineteen out of twenty times. Tables on sampling, discussions on methodology, and a copy of the questionnaire itself are included in the Appendix.

WHO ARE OUR PART TIME CLIENTS?

Sampling Realities

The distribution of respondents was chosen according to 1988/89 part-time registration data. Thus, three quarters of the sample were to be night school clients, one fifth "miscellaneous" (or contract training) clients and the remaining five per cent (5%) the correspondence clients. These proportions were met.



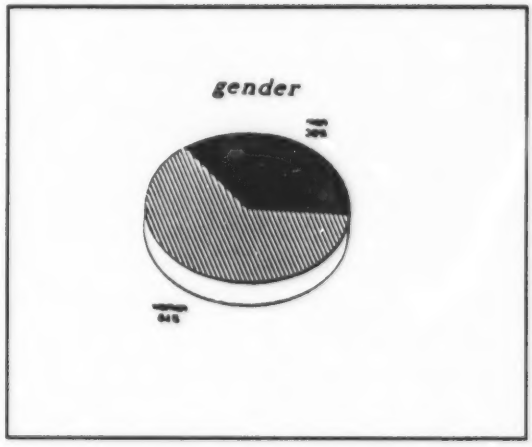
However, two (2) sub categories were under represented. The survey was conducted in the early spring, a slow time for part time training activity (Nicki, 1990). While registrations looked sufficient for the survey, actual attendances for the night school academic upgrading courses were very low. Extra classes were sampled to counteract this, however, the sample for francophone academic upgrading clients fell short of goal (11% vs 20% sought). Likewise there were no classes in 2nd Language training for francophones at the time of the survey, a group representing 2% of last year's part time training figures.

As a result, the survey population represented fewer francophones than desired: 33% instead of the 40% based upon the registrations for last year. However, as the data from the report will show, the effects of these limitations may be relatively minor.

So, it was clear at the outset that the majority of the part time clients would be night school clients, and that the majority of these would be taking some academic upgrading. The survey sought more detailed information. Questions were asked about gender, age, mother tongue, employment status, and distance to class. As a result, the following profile of our part-time clients emerges:

GENDER

Almost two thirds of the clients were women. This is not a surprise, as women tend to dominate night school, and night school dominates part time offerings. Looking closer at the **night school** categories, women outnumbered men two to one in academic upgrading and second language training. Most of the general interest clients were women (90%). But there were about equal numbers of men as women taking business courses in the evening.

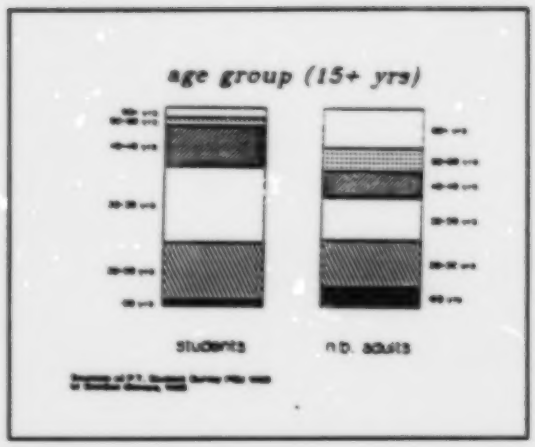


The contract training or **miscellaneous** courses were dominated by men, almost two to one (63%M 37%F). On the other hand the gender split was even for the **correspondence students,** a surprise as these are academic upgrading courses.

Interestingly, there was a language (or cultural) factor by gender. Fully four fifths (82%) of the francophone college clients were women. This held true for mother tongue as well (79% French speaking are women). On the other hand, there were almost equal men as women English speaking clients (54%F 46%M).

AGE GROUP

The majority (86%) of the clients were between 20-49 years of age: very few were over fifty or under twenty. There was a slight tendency for a wider age range for the English than French speaking clients (84% vs 91% of clients aged 20-49 years). Likewise, there tended to be a higher concentration of clients aged 20-29 years of age for credit courses (35% vs 28% for non credit courses). And, three quarters (74%) of the correspondence clients were under 30 years of age. Otherwise, ages of the various client groups were fairly similar.

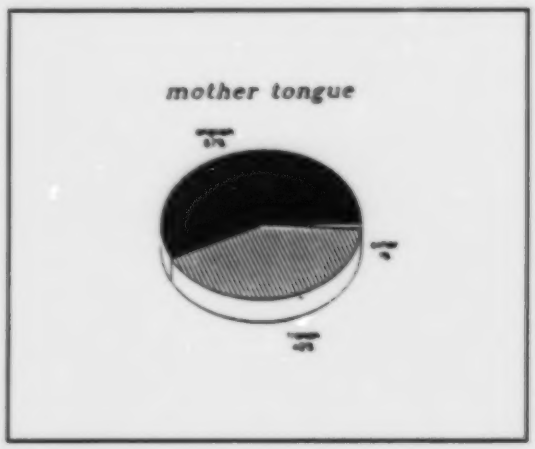


MOTHER TONGUE

A high proportion of the clients were French speaking, despite the undersampling of the French colleges. Thus, when asked about their mother tongue, 42% of the sample said French. This contrasts with 32% of the New Brunswick population claiming French as their mother tongue. It also contrasts with the 33% of the sample polled in French through the francophone colleges.

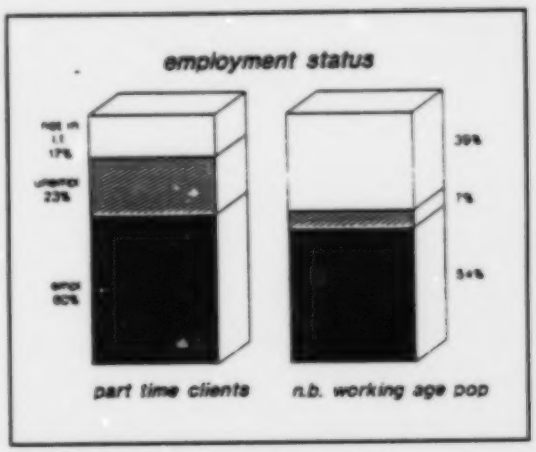
This means two things: First, French speaking New Brunswickers are more apt to take advantage of NBCC training opportunities than the English speaking. Second, the francophone clients do not restrict themselves to attending just francophone colleges.

A client profile by language is emerging: a higher than expected number of NBCC clients are francophone, most of whom are women 20-49 years of age. The anglophone clients are not so concentrated demographically. While they may not avail themselves as much of our training as their population share might suggest, those surveyed tended to be more evenly distributed regarding age and gender.



EMPLOYMENT STATUS

NBCC part time clients are more active in the labour force than are New Brunswick adults in general. Employment levels of both groups are similar, but actual labour force participation is much higher among our clients. This is because higher proportions of the jobless are looking for jobs, that is "unemployed" as opposed to "not in the labour force". **While 40% of these clients do not have jobs, well over half of these are actively looking (unemployed). By contrast, nearly half of New Brunswicker adults are not working, but very few are looking for work.** Perhaps an integral part of our clients' job hunting strategy includes training.



There were some differences by group. **Men and women differed.** Three quarters of the men had jobs. Ninety-two per cent (92%) were in the labour force. Only half of the women had jobs, and only three quarters were in the labour force. Gender doubtless accounted for the language difference, of a lower labour force participation among the francophones. It probably also explained the labour force participation profile of academic upgrading clients, which mirrored that of women, as did the general interest group.

Half of the correspondence students were not looking for jobs. This is the youngest group, half of whom are men, half English. Thus, **the correspondence students stand out as a rather separate group: young men and women who appear immobile and relatively inactive in the labour force.**

Not surprisingly, the labour force participation rates of the contract (miscellaneous), second language and the business students at night school all exceeded ninety per cent.

DISTANCE FROM CLASS

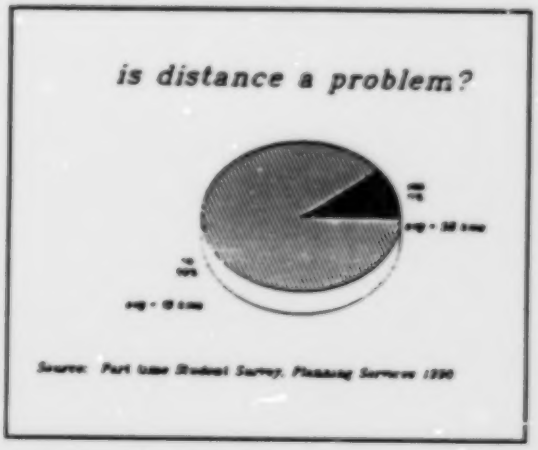
When asked if travelling distance posed a problem, the majority (89%) answered "no". The average distance to class for these respondents was much lower (13kms), than for those who did report travelling difficulties (36kms). It should be remembered that this survey was conducted in May and June, among classes that had begun after the winter was over. More difficulties may have been reported during the busier winter semester.

Some differences emerged by group. Distance became a problem for women at 32kms, for men at a greater distance, 42kms, but for equal proportions (11%) for both genders. **The greatest difficulty was expressed by the "miscellaneous" (contract training) group, 16% of whom reported a problem, with an average 45km one way trip to class.** This indicates that colleges need to be even more flexible when choosing training locations for this group.

Those clients from the academic upgrading (8%) and general interest (10%) courses who reported transportation difficulties had shorter distances to travel: 22kms and 24kms respectively. Course locations close to bus routes, or car pooling might make traveling easier for them.

Finally, fewer clients from anglophone (8%) than francophone (14%) colleges experienced travel problems. And problems arose at larger distances: 41kms for the former, 27kms for the latter.

Thus, clients of the francophone colleges are less mobile than clients at the anglophone colleges. Academic upgrading and general interest clients are also less mobile. And, higher numbers than average of miscellaneous and francophone clients report travel problems.

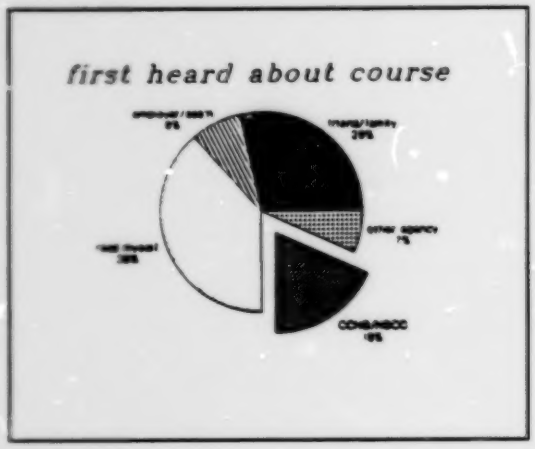


Summary profile of the part time clientele: *twice as many women as men, nine in ten are between 20 and 50 years of age, two fifths are francophone, three fifths anglophone and three quarters are active in the labour force. Distance to class is not a big problem, the majority travel less than 15kms to their course. Identifiable demographic profiles arose for the following groups: men/women; anglophone/francophone; correspondence course clients; upgrading students; business and contract training students.*

WHAT DID OUR CLIENTS LOOK FOR IN PART TIME TRAINING?

Finding Out About The Course

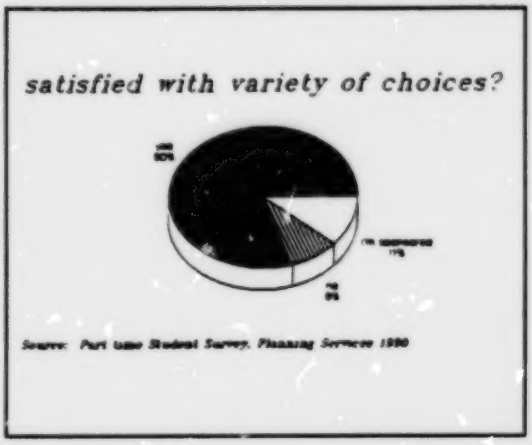
One of the first questions asked in the survey was how the client heard about the course. This is clearly a marketing question. The answers showed that **for the most part, the part time students went looking for their course themselves.** This means, of course, that they had already decided to take a course in their chosen subject, they just needed to find out where it was given. Thus, the most common reply (38%) was that they "read about it themselves", another group (18%) contacted the college. One quarter said they heard through family or friends, no doubt after the client asked "does anybody know where _____ is given?" **Only a few clients heard through their employer or professional association (8%), and a few (7%) were referred by other agencies (Income Assistance, YES etc.)**



Satisfaction With Choices

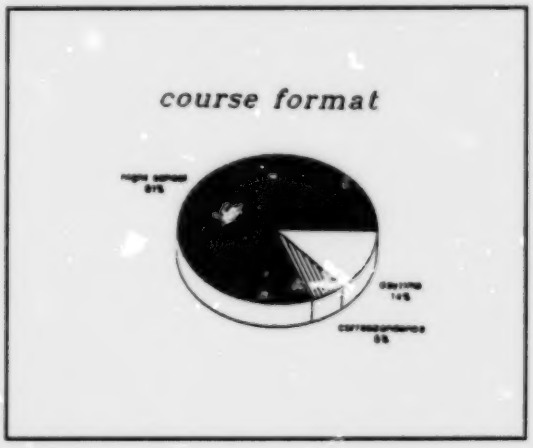
Is the variety of courses offered through part time scheduling satisfactory? Most of the respondents thought so: only eight percent said "no". The General Interest and 2nd Language clients were the most satisfied. The greatest dissatisfaction was registered by the Night School Business students, one of seven (14%) replying "no".

The same question also allowed another response: "I did not choose, as I am sponsored". It was expected that most of the miscellaneous (i.e. contract training) clients would choose this option. But only half of them did. When later asked about the fees, two thirds of these clients admitted that they were not the one who paid, the other third said there was no fee. A probable interpretation of this inconsistency is that while the contract students were indeed sponsored (indicated by who paid the fees), half of them perceived that they had a choice in the training. When people feel they are freely choosing their training, their commitment to that training is greater.



Course Format

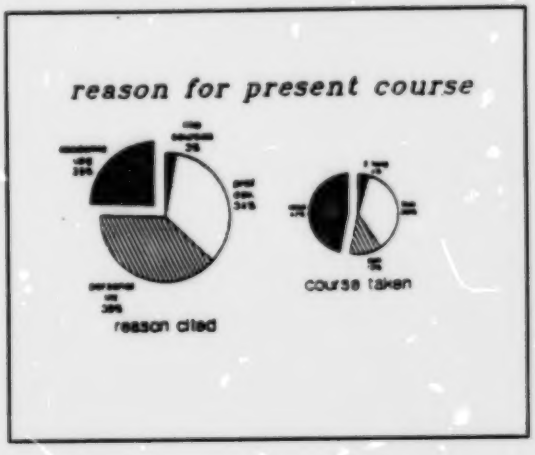
Do these clients take courses by day, night or correspondence? The only initial unknown was the answers for the miscellaneous (contract training) clients. These accounted for twenty per cent (20%) of the survey. The results showed that one quarter of contract training clients atended evening classes, the other three quarters attended daytime classes. Thus, **the majority (81%) of the clients took evening classes, a small number (14%) took daytime classes, and five percent (5%) took correspondence courses.** Their preferences for the hours of future courses will also be discussed later in the report.



Reason For Present Study

When looking at the type of course taken, almost half (47%) of the clients took academic upgrading, one third (36%) took business type courses, one in eight (13%) took general interest, and the remaining four per cent took 2nd Language training.

However, **people reported much different reasons for taking their courses than one would assume by looking at the type of course they took.** For example, while half took academic upgrading, only one quarter said they were taking their course for upgrading purposes. **The biggest reason for taking a course was "for personal interest" (38%), the next common reason was "for professional development" (34%).**



Understandably most of the General Interest clients (86%) cited personal interest, as did one half of the 2nd Language clients (52%), one third of the Business clients (34%), and one quarter (27%) of the Academic Upgrading clients. On the other hand, "professional development" was cited by only three fifths (59%) of the Business students, also by one third (32%) of the 2nd Language students, one in five Academic Upgrading (21%) students.

There was a gender difference. One half of the women said they were taking their course for personal interest (49%), one quarter for professional development (28%). The proportions were the exact opposite for men. A closer look at the results suggests this is what is happening: **The men said they took academic upgrading either for academic upgrading purposes or for personal interest (half and half), and taking business and 2nd language courses purely for professional development reasons. While women saw academic upgrading in the same way, one quarter of the women taking business or 2nd language courses said it was for personal interest.**

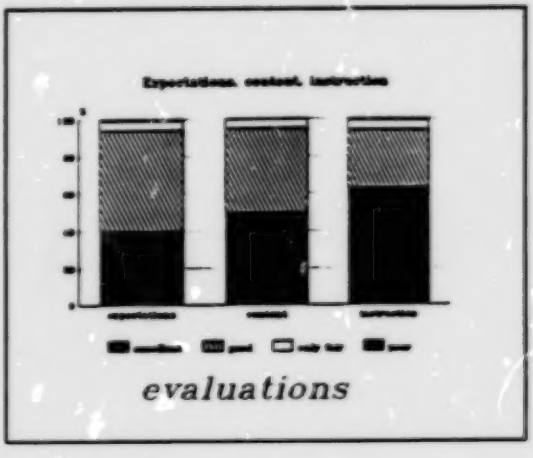
There was a language difference also. **For the anglophone clients half of the academic upgrading students said they took took their course for personal interest. The francophone clients showed this difference too, also they had a stronger tendency to take business courses for personal interest reasons, a characteristic of the women clients in general.**

Summary of what our clients sought: *most of the clients went looking for their course themselves, and they were generally pleased with the choice of courses available (even when they were sponsored to attend the course). And most attended courses in the evening hours. Regardless of the course they took, most said they took their course for personal interest or professional development reasons. Men and women behaved differently in this regard, as did the anglophones and francophones.*

PART TIME CLIENTS' EVALUATIONS OF THEIR TRAINING EXPERIENCES

Specific Logistical Difficulties

The biggest problem encountered was with the purchase of the textbook, with ten percent of the respondents mentioning this. Many comments spoke about the inavailability of textbooks. Many suggested the books be available in class, citing inaccessible bookstore hours, or no bookstore at all, if outside the college towns. The second most common problem was the course hours (6%), with comments saying the course was too short for the material covered, a particularly sore point for the academic upgrading clients. The correspondence students relayed some embarassing examples of poor material quality. Many checked off course announcements (6%), saying there is not enough advance notice of courses. Finally, a particular bugbear is the policy of not accepting personal cheques.



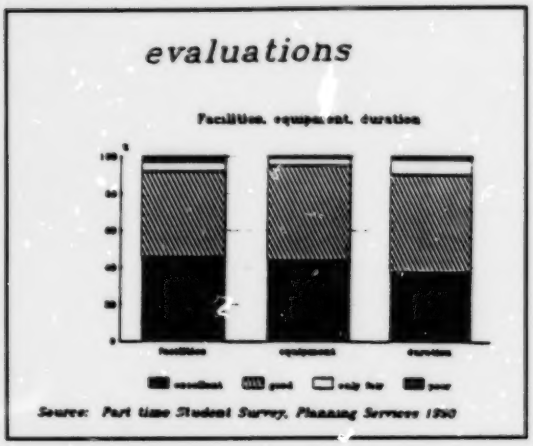
Evaluations

Respondents were asked to rate several aspects of their course as either excellent, good, only fair or poor. **The evaluations were overwhelmingly positive, with all aspects being rated as excellent or good by ninety per cent of the respondents.** This is a clear halo effect: the clients are so pleased with their course that they say very little is wrong with it. In such a situation, it is necessary to discriminate between the "excellent" and the "good" in order to detect any areas for improvement.

The quality of instruction was the clear winner in the evaluations: **more than three fifths (63%) of the clients rated their instruction as "excellent".** Fully ninety-four percent of the clients rated instruction as either excellent or good. This was consistent across all groups, except for the correspondence students (18%) whose instruction is not face to face.

Course content came second, with one half (50%) of the respondents rating it as excellent. The general interest clients were the most enthusiastic (61%), the 2nd language clients the least (33%)

Facilities ranked third, and equipment fourth with 46% and 44% excellent ratings, respectively. In both instances, it was the 2nd language (33% and 22%) and correspondence (26% and 18%) clients who did have some concerns. The degree to which the course met the clients' expectations (40% excellent overall) met with enthusiastic ratings by the general interest clients (52%), less enthusiasm from the 2nd language (21%) and correspondence (18%) clients. Finally, the most modest rating was received for course duration: 38% excellent. The academic upgrading (34%) and 2nd language (22%) were the most concerned.



Summary of evaluations: *the evaluations were overwhelmingly positive, with strong ratings for instruction and course content. The 2nd language students were concerned about content, facilities and equipment, and the correspondence students were concerned with all aspects except the course content.*

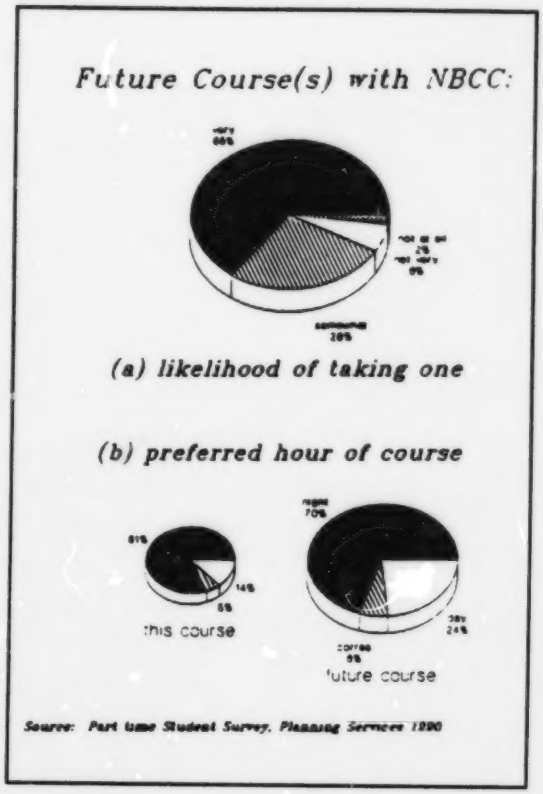
FUTURE TRAINING PLANS

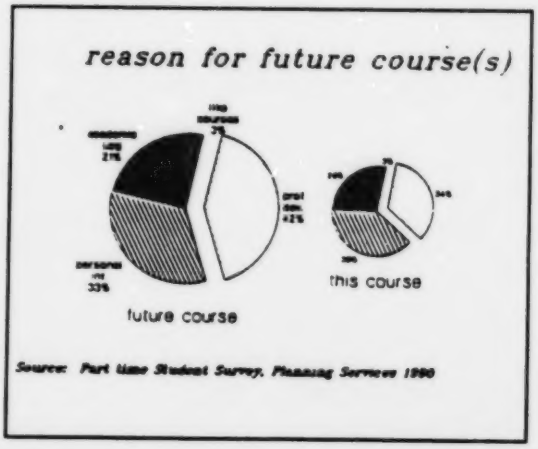
Perhaps the most surprising finding of the study was the number of people saying it is likely they will seek another course at the colleges over the next two (2) years. Last year when a similar question was asked of New Brunswick adults in general, 52% said they were very or somewhat likely to take any training over the next five (5) years. A generally similar response was expected here. However, **fully 65% of the respondents said it was very likely they would take another course with us over the next two years. Another quarter (26%) said it was somewhat likely: thus 91% surveyed said it is very or somewhat likely they will train with NBCC over the next two (2) years.** The correspondence students (78%) were the only group which differed in their expectations of returning, however, even those numbers were high.

This is a very ready market.

Next, they were asked why they would take another course, the choice of response options was the same as those given for the similar question on present course of study. This allowed for a comparison of the answers. Thus, today, most clients studied for reasons of personal interest with professional development as a close second. **However, for future courses, people are looking more towards professional development, with over forty per cent (42%) citing this as a reason for future training. Personal interest is the reason for one third of the clients.**

Respondents were also asked what format they would prefer for taking their course: nightschool, a course during the day or a correspondence course. Ten percent fewer than presently doing so would prefer night school, this same ten percent would prefer daytime courses. Also, few chose the correspondence course option.


Future Course(s) with NBCC:
(a) likelihood of taking one
(b) preferred hour of course
this course
future course
Source: Part time Student Survey, Planning Services 1990



Summary of future training plans: *the majority of those polled said they'd be back with NBCC within two (2) years for more training. In fact, more than half said it was very likely they'll be back. They have their eye more on the professional development courses for their return. And, they would like to explore more daytime hours for attending the courses.*

CONCLUSION

This study was undertaken to identify the Department's part time clientele, and their attitudes towards training, present and future. The goal was information gathering to help the Department discern its future strategic direction for part time training.

The results of this study are provocative for the Department. The part time clients being served have actively sought their training, enjoy that training and are interested in taking more. Further, the study shows that what one may consider to be the goal of a course, and what the client may consider it to be are two different things. Thus, many clients may take "business" courses for personal interest, conversely, they may take "general interest" courses for professional development. **Any training is fodder for a career change, any career development course fodder for personal development.** Clearly, this difference should be considered when future course offerings are planned.

The study also shows that some groups of the N.B. population are not as involved as others in part time training. For example, where is the francophone male? And why is part time training much more important for the francophone New Brunswickers than for the anglophones? What about the over fifty age group, the under twenty?

The study also provides answers to questions that the Department may only have guessed about. Thus, the contract training clientele are having to travel too far for their courses. Women, who tend to dominate the academic upgrading and general interest courses, have difficulty with transportation, also babysitting problems. Furthermore, the employment level of NBCC clients is not necessarily high, despite their age (most 20-50 years of age). What is high is their willingness to work, signified by "unemployed and looking for a job". This demonstrates that as far as provincial skill adjustment strategies go, a great number of private N.B. citizens are using part time training as a personal skill adjustment strategy. Unemployed New Brunswick adults want training, and are actively seeking it. Likewise, from their stated future plans, it appears they will continue to do so.

Perhaps the key finding of the study is the number of clients interested in taking further training with NBCC. Over half of the respondents said **it is very likely they will be taking another training course with the Community College over the next two (2) years**. Such a vote of confidence confers a heavy responsibility. The Department's challenge is to provide the type and quality of training its clients are seeking and under the flexible sorts of conditions requested.

In this respect the respondents gave several ideas. One quarter of the respondents would be interested in a course during daytime hours. Given the unemployed status of many, weekdays appear highly possible. Also, translated into real numbers, one quarter of thirty two thousand clients equals eight thousand who would like a course during the day. The course locations may have to be dispersed even wider from the college centers. Likewise, services associated with the training, such as registration hours and locations, book purchases, method of payment for courses would have to be more flexible. As, in fact, should the course duration, which is insufficient according to the academic upgrading and 2nd language clients.

Clients taking correspondence courses need particular attention. They are a very distinct group: they are the youngest, there are as many men as women, they appear relatively immobile and their labour force participation is low. Judging by their comments, they want their high school diploma, often seeing the correspondence course as their only means of attaining it. However, many say the courses are not attractive, the material is often outdated and poorly copied, the feedback and instruction often unclear. They are communicating a sense of isolation. To improve their situation, they are suggesting a closer link with their tutor. Indeed were the Department to revise some aspects of its correspondence training service, this form of academic upgrading would be a more attractive option for more people in the same situation.

The 2nd language clients are also providing valuable feedback. The high evaluations given the instructors contrast strongly with other evaluative feedback. Areas identified for improvement were course content, the course not meeting their expectations and with the equipment and facilities.

APPENDIX I

DISCUSSION: METHODOLOGY

The only sampling difficulty was in finding enough francophone academic upgrading clients to fill the questionnaire. The attached chart on sampling proportions shows the difference between the proportions sought, and those actually received for all part time training categories. The desired proportions were based on the 1988/89 part time training enrolments.

The survey was done in early spring. And, although many academic upgrading classes were said to have 15 to 20 members, typically only 3 or 4 would be present when the survey was distributed. However, this was not the case for any of the other categories sampled: there was high attendance for both general interest and business courses. The question is raised as to whether this is a normal attendance situation for academic upgrading classes?

Part-Time Training Survey

Proportions sought (based upon 1988-89 registrations) vs Proportions in sample (n=496)

(a) Overall

	Night School							
	Academic	Business	General Int.	2nd Lang.	S.-Total	Miscellaneous	Correspondence	TOTAL
#s 1988-89	14275	4747	3427	1929	24378	6058	1578	32014
= %	45	15	10	6	76	19	5	100%
Survey	192	93	62	21	368	99	29	496
= %	39	19	12	4	74	20	6	100%

(b) Anglophone

	Night School							
	Academic	Business	General Int.	2nd Lang.	S.-Total	Miscellaneous	Correspondence	TOTAL
#s 1988-89	7601	2825	2215	1451	14092	4175	1067	19334
= %	25	9	6	4	44	13	3	60%
Survey	135	58	29	21	243	69	18	330
= %	27	12	6	4	49	14	4	67%

(c) Francophone

	Night School							
	Academic	Business	General Int.	2nd Lang.	S.-Total	Miscellaneous	Correspondence	TOTAL
#s 1988-89	6674	1922	1212	478	10286	1883	511	12680
= %	20	6	4	2	32	6	2	40%
Survey	57	35	33	0	125	30	11	166
= %	11	7	7	0	25	6	2	33%

ADVANCED EDUCATION AND TRAINING
PART TIME TRAINING SURVEY

"your opinion matters to us"

We are doing this survey so you can tell us what you think of your course, what kind of courses you want in the future, and a bit about yourself.

This course is given by the Community College, which is a part of the province's Department of Advanced Education and Training. Last year, more than thirty-four thousand (34000) New Brunswickers took part time training courses from us. Like the one you are taking today.

The answers you give us today will help us to plan our future part time courses. So, please *be frank with us.*

We are not asking for your name. We do not need it. And, *your individual answers are confidential.* Thank you for answering this survey.

PLEASE CHECK ONLY ONE ANSWER UNLESS TOLD OTHERWISE

FIRST, about this course:

1. How did you **first** hear about this course being available?

   ☐ from friend or family
   ☐ from employer
   ☐ read about it myself (newspaper, other advertisement)
   ☐ college or school counsellor
   ☐ other, specify: _____

2. When you chose your course, were you satisfied with the variety of choices available through the Community College?

   ☐ yes
   ☐ no
   ☐ I didn't really choose, I am sponsored by an agency or my employer

3. How is this course given?

   ☐ night school
   ☐ correspondence ... (Go To Question 6)
   ☐ daytime course (contract training)
   ☐ one or two day seminar type course (management education)

ABOUT THIS COURSE (Cont'd)

4. How far is this course from your home? **(in kilometers)**

_____ kms

5. Does this travelling distance pose a problem for you?

☐ yes ☐ no

6 Did you have problems with ANY OF the following services? **CHECK ALL THAT APPLY AND COMMENT**

☐ timing of course announcements
☐ time and place of registration
☐ method of paying for courses
☐ purchase of textbooks and other course materials
☐ course location
☐ course hours (time of day)
☐ other
☐ COMMENT _____

7. Do you consider the fees you paid for this course: (AGAIN, CHECK ONE ONLY)

☐ about right
☐ too much
☐ a real bargain
☐ this course has no fees
☐ I wasn't the one who paid

8. Why are you taking this course?

☐ for academic upgrading
☐ for my own personal interest
☐ for professional development (upgrade existing skills)
☐ I like taking courses
☐ other: specify _____

9. In general how well would you say your course is meeting your expectations:

excellent ☐ good ☐ only fair ☐ poor ☐

10. In general, how satisfied are you with each of these aspects of your course **(check ONE answer for each)**

	excellent	good	only fair	poor
- the course content	☐	☐	☐	☐
- the facilities	☐	☐	☐	☐
- the equipment	☐	☐	☐	☐
- the quality of instruction	☐	☐	☐	☐
- the duration of the course	☐	☐	☐	☐

comments:_____

_____

NOW, about your own training needs: OVER THE NEXT TWO (2) YEARS

11. Over the next two (2) years, how likely do you think it is that you will be taking another training course with the Community College?

GO TO QUESTION 12
- ☐ very likely
- ☐ somewhat likely

GO TO QUESTION 14
- ☐ not very likely
- ☐ not at all likely

12. How would you take your course with us? **(Check the MOST likely)**

- ☐ night school
- ☐ correspondence
- ☐ daytime course (contract training)
- ☐ a one or two day seminar type course (management education)
- ☐ other: specify _____

13. For what reason would you take this course with the Community College? **(Check the MOST likely)**

- ☐ for academic upgrading
- ☐ for my own personal interest
- ☐ for professional development (upgrade existing skills)
- ☐ I like taking courses
- ☐ other: specify _____

GO TO QUESTION 16

14. If NOT VERY LIKELY OR NOT AT ALL LIKELY, why not?

- ☐ I don't need any more courses right now
- ☐ I am not satisfied enough with your services
- ☐ you are not offering the course I'd want: specify: _____

FINALLY, to let us know our customers a little better, please tell us:

15. How many OTHER courses have you **taken with the Community College** over the past two (2) years?

_____ courses or ☐ none

16. Have you taken any courses BUT NOT WITH THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE over the past two (2) years? How many? Please list them.

_____ courses or ☐ none

names of courses _____

17. Are you:
☐ a man
☐ a woman

18. Are you currently: (CHECK THE ONE THAT BEST APPLIES TO YOU)

☐ employed
☐ not looking for a job (at home, retired, a student etc.)
☐ unemployed (looking for a job)

19. What is your mother tongue: (CHECK THE ONE THAT BEST APPLIES TO YOU)

☐ English
☐ French
☐ Native (Micmac, Maliseet)
☐ Other: specify

20. In what year were you born? 19___

Are there any OTHER COMMENTS you could make to help us?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

THANK YOU VERY MUCH ... YOUR HELP IS GREATLY APPRECIATED!!

STUDENT RETENTION AND ATTRITION

FOREWORD

When students leave their post secondary studies before finishing, nobody gains. In fact, the costs are both human and financial.

To the institution there are first the financial losses. Since today training and recruiting costs are on the rise, the losses must be examined and curbed. On the human side, staff morale falls as attrition rises.

And the student who was unable to complete his or her training loses. As well as the lost year, in most cases that student will never return post secondary studies. As a result, society suffers.

The N.B. Department of Advanced Education and Training is interested in curbing these losses, in reducing its attrition. This study is one initial step in that endeavour.

The report provides a closer look at attrition in the New Brunswick Community Colleges, then discusses some strategies that others have found successful in reducing their post secondary attrition rates.

Pamela Easterbrook-Nadeau
Planning Services

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With the costs of post secondary training rising, whenever a student drops out of training, it is a matter of concern. The cost of training empty seats is rising.

This is a report on attrition in the context of the New Brunswick Community Colleges. It consists of two parts. The first part is an analysis of attrition data on all long term fulltime NBCC programmes which began in September of each of the four years studied. The second part offers a review of the literature on attrition (and its converse: "retention") that offer insight into means of addressing the New Brunswick situation.

Attrition in the New Brunswick Community Colleges (NBCCs)

- attrition has vacillated between 21% and 25% over the past four years: it is neither rising nor falling;
- rates for first year students are double those of second year students;
- on average 745 students leave their programme each year, 70% of whom leave by the end of December;
- there have not been any noticeable trends in the type of attrition (withdraw, cancel or transfer) occurring; regarding "persisters" the only trend is towards fewer "succeeds" but more "carry-overs" a trend which reflects the growing number of 2 year programmes;
- the highest number of students leave the pre-employment programmes: In fact half of all student leavers in any one year are dropping out of year one of a pre-employment programme;
- attrition rates are the highest for year one of technology programmes, which averaged 34% over the four years studied. The second highest number of student leavers come from this category;
- the highest number of both pre-employment and technology leavers left their programme in the Saint John Community College;
- last year 153 students dropped out of the technologies in Saint John: the highest number of leavers in any category in any college that year;

A Review of the Literature on Attrition and Retention

- while there are both institution related reasons and individual reasons for attrition in post secondary education and training institutions, attrition results when "the fit between the student and the college" is inadequate;

- colleges and universities which succeed in reducing attrition have instigated student success strategies which address some of the suspected causes in the particular institution, to "provide a better fit" between the institution and the student, and help the student concentrate on his or her study goals;

- the Student Success Program at Georgian College in Barrie, Ontario is described.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the subject of attrition has been receiving unprecedented attention in the field of post secondary education and training.

Attrition refers to the numbers of students who, for whatever reason, do not complete their chosen course of study. The study of attrition has traditionally sought to identify those factors that cause a student to withdraw from a program.

However, today the concern is amplified, as attrition rates are too high. While an attrition level up to 10% is normal, attrition could reach 30% or higher in some community colleges (Baker, 1986). In fact, in an effort to bring attention to the issue, a recent Canadian university publication called on universities to consider the student, and suggested that the 1990's be **the decade of the student.** Thus, while universities and colleges today still want to know what causes attrition, they are more interested in knowing how to reduce it.

The N.B. Department of Advanced Education and Training is no exception. It wants to know more about its own attrition situation. **This is the first goal of the report**

The Department also wants to know what the issues are in the study of attrition and thereby what to do to reduce attrition. **This is the second goal of the report.**

PART ONE: ATTRITION IN THE N.B. COMMUNITY COLLEGES

To date, well defined information on the level of attrition in New Brunswick's Community Colleges has not been available.

For example, the most recent figures available to the Department had shown that of all fulltime students (in courses >20 wks) enrolled in CCNB courses in September 1988, only 68% were successful the following June (continuations were not counted in this figure). And, most of the 32% unsuccessful had dropped out. However, these figures were based on headcounts only. This would be fine, if not for the influence of the continuous entrance-exit programs offered by the Department. Some of these programs begin after September, while others end before June. Thus, their numbers are either included in the September or June headcount. This gives a distorted overall attrition indicator.

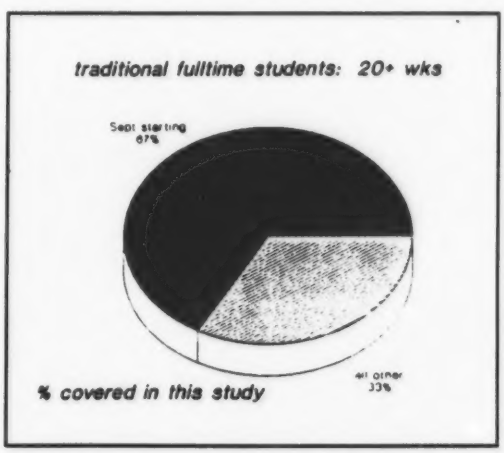
Instead a more accurate attrition indicator is possible. A specific group of fulltime students could be isolated, and their attrition documented. In this way the Department would have a more accurate idea of its attrition level. This was done for this report.

DATA

Termination status reports were requested for **all students enrolled in all programmes over 20 weeks in duration whose academic year began in September, whether or not that was the first or second year of the programme.**

The reports gave numbers of original students still in class at the beginning of every month from September to June. Likewise, the numbers of students withdrawing each month were shown, for each of four years: 1986/87 to 1989/90.

Numbering approximately 3200 students in each of the four years studied (1986/87 - 1989/90), **the resultant population represents approximately two thirds of the traditional fulltime student population (Ss in courses exceeding 20 wks).**



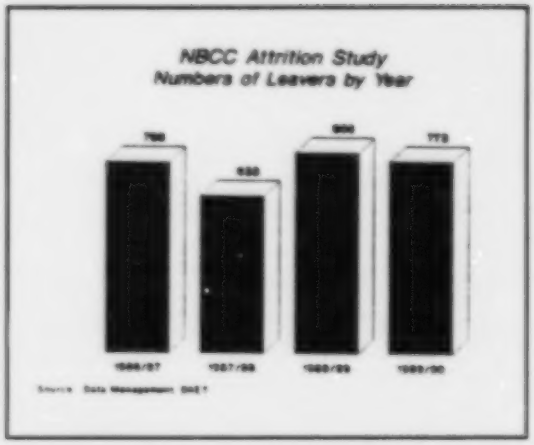
OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

Attrition was defined as any withdrawl from the original programme of study before the programme terminated, and included any one of three reasons: cancels, withdraws, or transfers to another programme of study. Successful and unsuccessful completions which occured before June were counted as if the student had persisted until June, that is, not left before completing the programme. In this discussion, a **withdrawl** occurs when the student voluntarily leaves the programme, a **cancellation** occurs when the student is asked to leave, and a **transfer** occurs when the student changes to another programme.

FINDINGS: ATTRITION IN NBCCs (1986/87-1989/90)

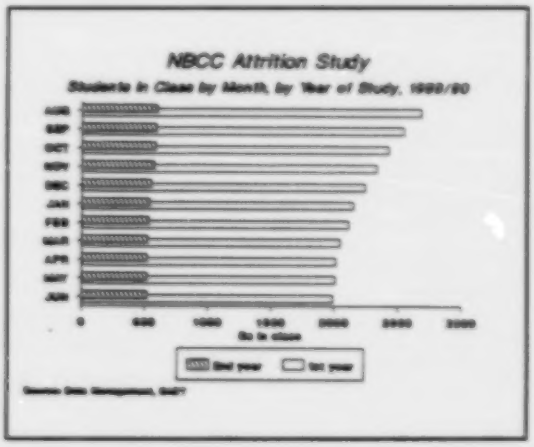
GLOBAL RESULTS

In general over the four years, the completion status was as follows: **almost half succeeded and graduated, another quarter passed their first year to go into a second year of study, and the remaining quarter failed to complete their year.**



The attrition level vacillated from one year to the next. Thus, in 1986/87 attrition was 24%. It dropped to 21.3% in 1987/88, then rose to 25.3% in 1988/89. Last year (1989/90) it came down (23.6%) to meet the 1986/87 level. **Numbers of students not completing their course of study averaged seven hundred and forty-five (745) each year over the four year period (ranging from 633 to 807 student leavers in any one year).**

The lower attrition rate of 1987/88 stood out. This was the year with the fewest September enrolments (200 fewer than in the other three years). There were enrolment reductions in most of the nine (9) colleges, and this was strongly correlated with a lower student retention figure for that year.



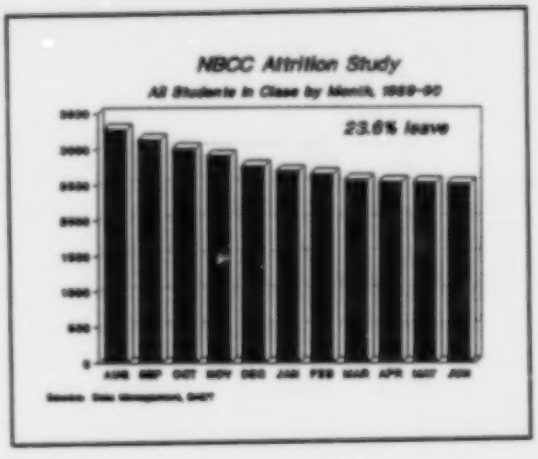
Attrition By Year of Study

Attrition rates were much higher for students in the first year of study, than for students in the second year. In fact, they were almost double. Attrition levels averaged 25.6% for the former group, and 13.5% for the latter. This is a significant difference which will be analyzed in depth later in the report.

Attrition By Month

The time of year when students left their programmes is another important factor in the study of attrition, as it may give insight into why people are dropping out of their course before completion. Community colleges in some other jurisdictions had reported that as much as 80% of attrition occurs during the first two months of class (ACCC Conferences 1988, 1989).

This was not the case for NBCC students. Two months into class, or by the beginning of November, only forty per cent (40%) of the attrition had occurred. Instead **most, or 70%, of student leavers in any one year had left by the end of December**. After the end of December, the numbers leaving each month were relatively modest.

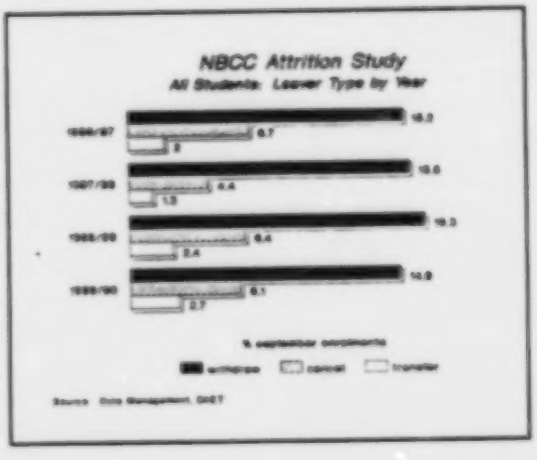


Attrition by Type

It is useful to remember the numbers behind the percentages being discussed. A one per cent difference refers to the movement of roughly thirty-two (32) students.

As noted, the attrition level vacillated around the twenty-four per cent (24%) mark over the four year period. However, when looking at the type of attrition, some variations were noticeable. **Withdrawls rose one per cent (1%) over the first three years, and then last year dropped back to original levels of 15%. Transfers are generally up from 2% to 3%. However, cancellations dropped back noticeably from 7% to 4% over the first two years, and levelled off at 6% over the last two years.**

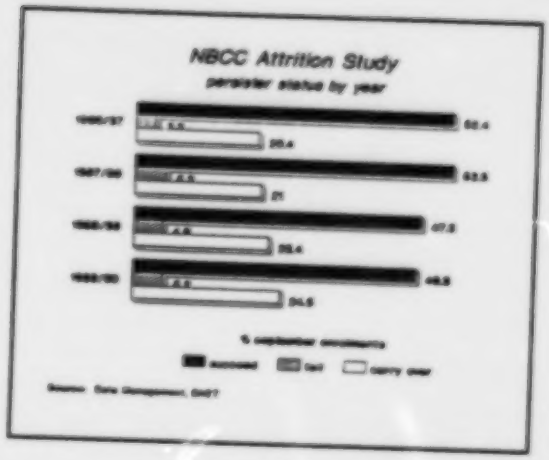
The year 1987/88 bears mention again. Withdrawls during this year were greater than the year previous, but cancellations and transfers were down. Then when the total enrolments rose again the next year, all types of attrition also rose. However, this does not necessarily mean that attrition rises with the size of the student population, as attrition levels improved in 1989/90, the year with the highest number of students.



Status of Persisters

There are three possibilities for the status of a persister, or student who stayed in class until the end of the programme: "successful", "fails", or "carries over" to the next year of study. **The majority of students passed their year (successful or carry over). These successful completions ranged from 70% to 73% of all enrolments over the four years.** Failure rates were 3% in 1986/87 and 5% in each year after that.

Apart from the rise in students failing their year, the main trend over the four years was for five percent (5%) fewer "successfuls" but four percent (4%) more "carry overs". This would result from higher numbers of people going into a second year of study. As such, this trend reflects the growing number of two year courses offered by the colleges.



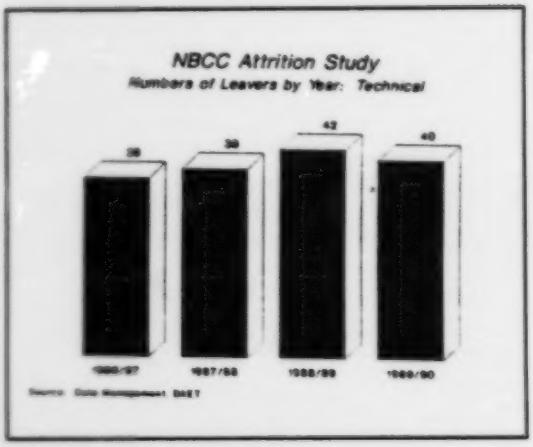
Summary of Global Results *over the four year period studied, one quarter of all NBCC students who enrolled in fulltime traditional courses in September failed to complete their programme. More than two thirds (70%) of these leavers had left by the end of December. The attrition rate vacillated over the four years studied. No real trends were observed, except that attrition was lower when total enrolments were also lower. On the other hand, attrition did not peak with enrolments. Significant differences in programme dropout rates were found between first year and second year students. Regarding the "persisters", two trends were observable: a generally higher rate of failures (from 3% to 5%), and higher numbers of people continuing into a second year of study. This latter trend reflects the NBCC trend of offering more second year training seats.*

ATTRITION IN EACH CATEGORY OF TRAINING

Three (3) categories of training are provided by the community colleges: pre-employment, technical and technology. Each showed distinct patterns of student attrition. It should also be noted that while there were some 2nd year students in all categories, the numbers in 2nd year technical and pre-employment programmes were relatively low, averaging 45. On the other hand, there were significant numbers of 2nd year technology students, averaging 500 in each year studied.

Technical Programmes

The technical category is the smallest studied, with only 150 to 250 students enrolled in each of the four years studied. This represents only five to eight per cent (5-8%) of fulltime enrolments in any one year. Also, the **technical programmes showed the lowest attrition levels, ranging from 15.2% in 1989/90 to 24.4% in 1987/88, and averaging 20% over the four years.**



The net effect of these figures is a reduction in attrition level since 1987/88. This trend was led primarily by fewer withdrawls, which shrank by almost one half.

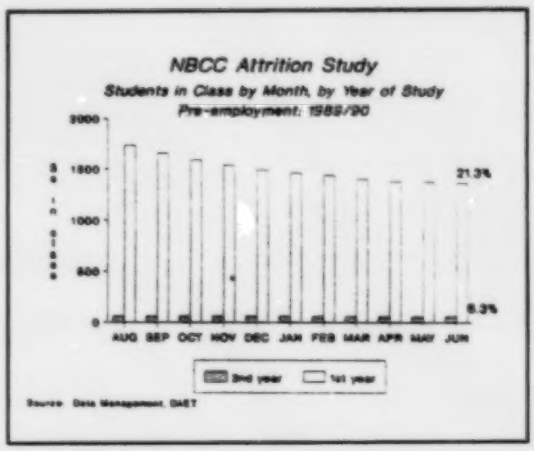
Differences in attrition levels for 1st year and 2nd year students were strong. Dropout rates for 2nd year students were low: from 13.5% in 1987/88 to 2.4% last year, with a 6.5% average over the period studied. Higher 1st year student dropout rates averaged 22.7%, ranging from 27.7% recorded in 1987/88 to last year's low of 17.5%. It should also be noted that last year's 17.5% dropout rate for first year technical students is the lowest first year attrition rate of any category or year of this study.

Regarding the status of persisters, as a corollary to the lower attrition levels, more people are staying in class to the end of the programme. Both failures and carry-overs appear to be climbing. Successful completion rates averaged 76.3% over the four year period.

Actual numbers of students leavers in the technical category were relatively low, totalling between thirty-six and forty-two (36-42) in any one of the four years studied.

Pre-Employment Programmes

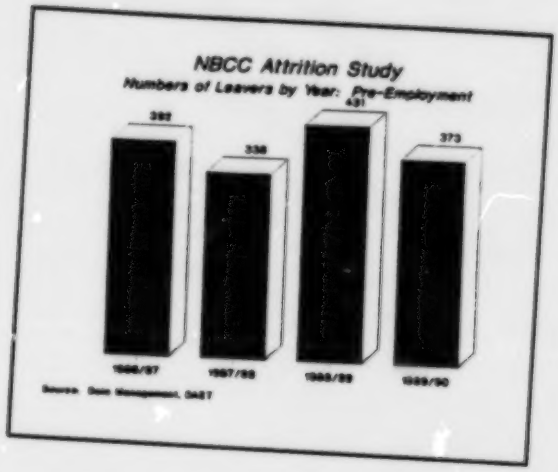
The pre-employment category is the largest training category. There were between sixteen to seventeen hundred (1600-1700) students enrolled per year in the four years studied. **Attrition levels for all pre-employment programmes ranged from 20.4% in 1987/88 to 24.5% in 1988/89, with a four year average of 22%.**



These figures show a vacillation in net attrition over the four years. However, until this past year, withdrawls had been steadily increasing. For persisters, the only discernable trend was for more students to go on to a second year of study Successful completion rates averaged 73.8% over the four year period.

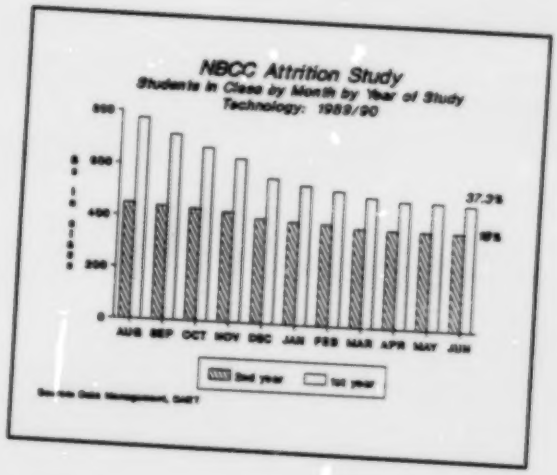
Year one attrition rates ranged between 20.7% in 1987/88 and 24.7% in 1988/89, averaging 22.3% over the four years. On the other hand, dropout rates for 2nd year students ranged from 0% in 1987/88 to 15.4% in 1988/89, with a four year average of 7.4%. However, only 2% of all pre-employment students were in 2nd year programmes.

This is the largest training category, with the bulk of its students in the 1st year of study, where dropout rates are higher. Thus it is not surprising that more than half of all student leavers in any one year are dropping out of pre-employment programmes (n= 338-431). In fact, **half of all student leavers in any one year are dropping out of their first year in a pre-employment programme.**



Technology

There were approximately twelve hundred (1200) students enrolled in technology programmes in each of the years studied, making it the second largest training category. However, unlike the other two categories, close to half of all technology students were enrolled in 2nd year programmes (500 of 1200).

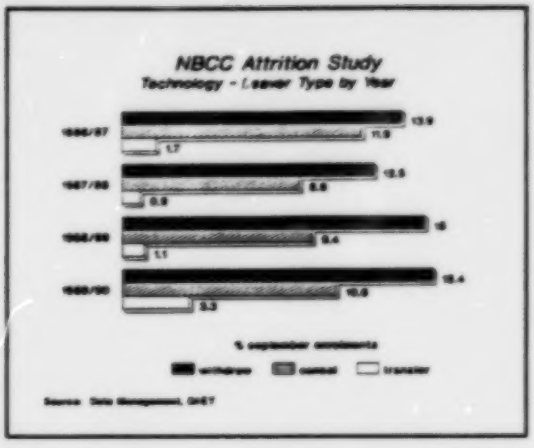

NBCC Attrition Study
Students in Class by Month by Year of Study
Technology: 1989/90
37.3%
AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN
2nd year
1st year

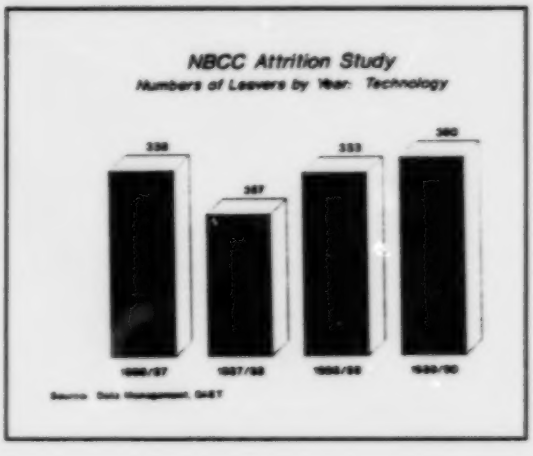
Technology is the category posting the highest overall dropout figures, with levels ranging from a low of 22.1% in 1987/88 to the high of 29.5% in 1989/90, and averaging 26.5% over the four years. The dropoffs were heaviest between September and December.

The overall net trend has been for all types of attrition to rise over the past three (3) years, with high numbers of transfers recorded this year. Thus, on the other side of the coin, this has meant fewer persisters in recent years. Successful completion rates fell from 72% in 1987/88 to 65% in 1989/90.

Furthermore, the differences in dropout rates by year of study were larger in the technology programmes. **First year attrition rates averaged 34.4%, while 2nd year rates averaged 14.5% over the four years.** The highest levels for both 1st and 2nd year students were reached last year, with a 37.7% dropout rate for 1st year, and a 16% rate for 2nd year students. On the other hand, the lows were recorded in 1987/88 with a 30.1% 1st year, and a 10.4% 2nd year student dropout rate.

While technology students account for close to forty percent (38%) of enrolments, they also comprise close to fifty percent of leavers (46%, n=257-336) in any one year. Also, technology programmes tend to be costly to deliver. Given the high proportions of technology students dropping out in any one year, this is an area that would pose special interest for the Department.





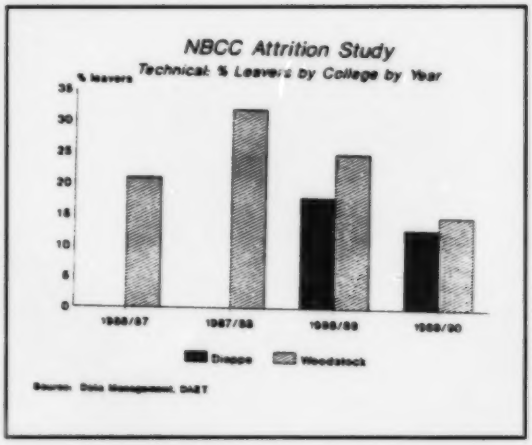
Summary of Attrition by Category of Training *attrition patterns for each type of training category are distinct. The "technical" category is the smallest training category, averaging around 200 students per year, only 40 of whom are leavers. Attrition is the lowest in this category, and has been falling off lately to reach last year's low of 15.9%. Pre-employment is the largest training category, training between 16-1800 students in any one of the four years studied. As in all categories, attrition is lower for 2nd year students, but because there are so few of these the higher 1st year attrition rates coupled with the higher number of students in this category, means that half of all student leavers in any one year are dropping out of their first year in a pre employment programme. Finally, technology is the second largest training category, averaging around 1200 students per year. Unlike the other two categories, however, a high proportion (42%) of its students are in their 2nd year of study. Thus, the bulk of all 2nd year students are in 2nd year technology courses. While 2nd year attrition averages 14.5%, it is much lower than the average rate of 34.4% for the first year students. Almost half of all student leavers are technology students.*

ATTRITION IN THE COLLEGES BY TRAINING CATEGORY

Since not all of the nine (9) Community Colleges provide training in all three (3) categories discussed, it would be useless to compare net attrition rates by college. Instead, where important differences in the attrition rates by category are noted from one college to the next, they will be highlighted.

Technical Programmes x College

Only five colleges provide technical training: three (3) francophone (Bathurst, Dieppe and Edmundston), and two (2) anglophone (Moncton and Woodstock) colleges. Of the total 224 seats in this category of training last year, the bulk were in Dieppe (92 seats) and Woodstock (107). Again, it should be remembered that only 40 people dropped out of this training category last year.



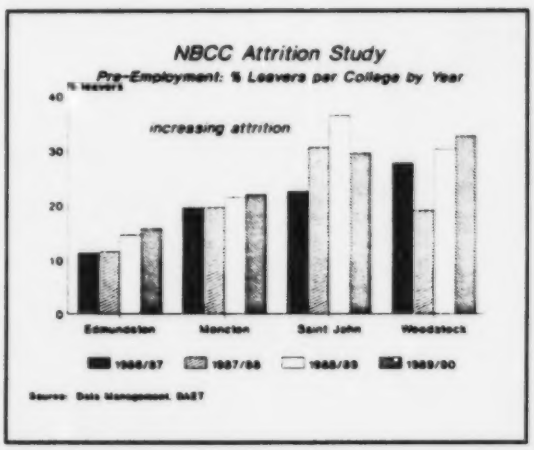
Attrition rates had been generally higher in the anglophone colleges over the years, until last year. The change seems to have resulted from the reduced attrition in Woodstock, from 24.4% to 15% over the last year. While Dieppe has been providing technical training for only three years, its level of attrition has been below average for all three years.

Pre-Employment Programmes x College

All nine colleges provide pre employment training. Last year, the number of pre-employment training seats per college ranged from Woodstock's 76 seats to Moncton's 290 seats. Also, for three colleges: Campbellton (200 seats), Miramichi (126 seats) and St. Andrews (205 seats), all of their training provided was in the pre-employment category.

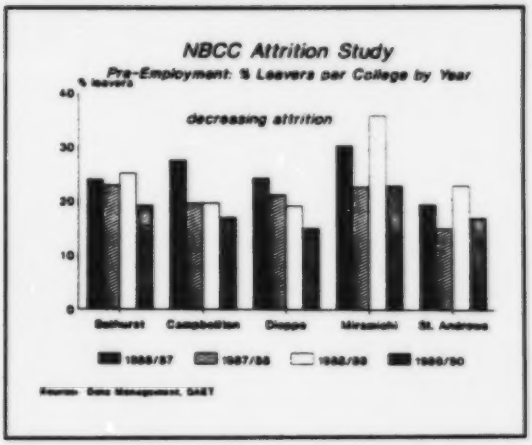
Generally speaking, the anglophone colleges accounted for the higher proportion of attrition in this category, over all four years. Thus, last year, while 53% of all pre-employment training was in the anglophone colleges, they also accounted for 62% of pre-employment attrition.

At the Miramichi, the smallest college, attrition rates have been quite high, but may be coming down. Starting out at 30.4% in 1986/87, they fell the next year, then climbed to 36%, but fell again to 23% last year. The rates in Saint John have likewise been vacillating and above average over the fours years: between 22.7% and 36.3%, dropping to 29.7% last year. **As a result, the highest numbers of pre-employment dropouts left their programme in the Saint John college.** Also recording above average attrition rates in this category is the Woodstock college, and these seem to be climbing, reaching 32.9% last year, the highest rate recorded in this category.



Moncton's pre-employment attrition rates have been generally below average in all years, but the rate is slowly climbing: from 19.7% in 1986/87 to 22.1% last year. Finally, St. Andrews had the best showing for Anglophone colleges. It has posted below average attrition rates all four years, and these may be falling, reaching 17.1% last year.

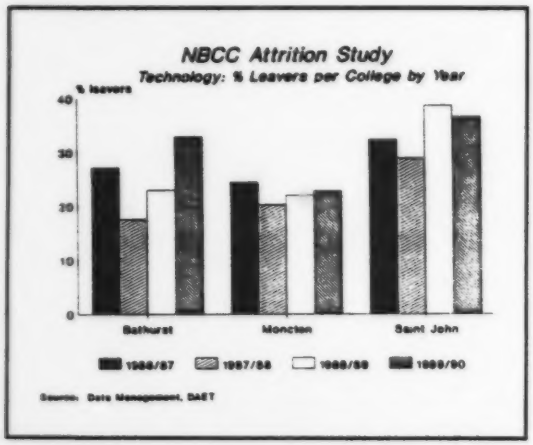
In Bathurst, the pre-employment attrition rate has fallen from 24.1% in 1986/87 to 19.3% last year. In Campbellton, the rate has fallen steadily from 27% in 1986/87 to 17% last year. Likewise the Dieppe attrition rate in this category fell steadily from 24.4% in 1986/87 to 15.1% last year. And, in Edmundston, the pre-employment attrition rate has been the lowest of all colleges in all years but the last. However, the rate has been steadily climbing: from 11.4% in 1986/87 to 15.9% last year, still the second lowest rate in this category.



Technology Programmes x College

Only five of the colleges provide training in the technology category. And the bulk of these last year (95%) were in three colleges: Bathurst (225 seats), Moncton (514 seats) and Saint John (420 seats). Dieppe (42 seats) and Edmundston (24 seats) provided relatively little technology training.

Moncton's attrition rate in technologies has been below average all four years, and generally decreasing over time (to 22.8% last year). However, it has been much higher in Saint John. Vacillating between 28.8% and 38.5% over the four years, it settled at 36.4% last year. This high rate, taken together with the number of seats, means that **the attrition in technology training in the Saint John college is the highest for any college by training category.** Last year, for example, 153 students dropped out of the technologies in Saint John. For Bathurst, the technology attrition rate has been below average, until this year when it rose to 32.9% from 23% the year before.



Finally, technology attrition levels have been generally below average for Dieppe. Edmundston too has been below average, until this last year when one third of the 21 seats were vacated during the year.

Summary of Attrition in the Colleges by Training Category: *as not all colleges provide training in all three categories, comparisons of overall attrition levels by College are meaningless. Instead, comparisons within training category are more useful. In the Pre-employment category, the Anglophone colleges in general, and specifically Saint John and Woodstock, posted higher than average attrition levels. For the francophone colleges, pre-employment attrition levels were generally below average, except for Bathurst which is only marginally above average. The Technical training accounts for very few seats (224 seats last year) and the majority is offered in Dieppe and Woodstock. The Dieppe attrition levels in this category are below average. Woodstock has been above average until this past year, when attrition in the technical category fell to 15%. Most of the Technology training is likewise concentrated in only a few colleges: Bathurst, Saint John and Moncton. Of these, Saint John has consistently recorded the highest attrition rates, leading to the highest overall number of students dropping out in any category in any college. Moncton's attrition in the technologies is below normal, as has Bathurst's been until this past year, when it rose to 32.9%. Also, last year, one third of the 21 technology seats in Edmundston were vacated during the year.*

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to give the Department some clear information on attrition in the N.B. Community Colleges. It sought not only bottom line figures on the overall attrition level, but also some specifics. Such specifics as when the student left his or her programme of study, how he or she left, and in what year of the training programme. Finally, the attrition profile was given for each category of training, as it was for each of the nine (9) Community Colleges.

The study showed an overall attrition level of 24%. There was no specific trend in overall attrition, as the rate vacillated from one year to the next, of the four years studied.

Attrition varied greatly, depending upon the year of the programme in which the student was studying. Proportionately more students dropped out of the first, than second year of study. There were also differences according to the category of training, with the technologies showing the higher rates, the technical programmes the lowest. Finally, attrition rates varied from one college to another, when looking at training category by college.

Looking at sheer numbers, approximately seven hundred and fifty students dropped out of a N.B. Community College training programme each year for the past four years. Most of these were voluntary withdrawls. Half of the students left the first year of a pre-employment programme, and almost one half left a technology programme.

This study has yielded some valuable information on when, how and where students are leaving their chosen programme of study. It has not, however, delved into the reasons behind the attrition figures. Should the Department choose to take measures to deal with its attrition level, an appropriate next step might be to investigate reasons behind students' leaving.

The next part of the report provides a review of the literature in which students' leaving behavior is discussed.

PART TWO: A REVIEW OF ATTRITION AND ITS ISSUES

REASONS FOR EXAMINING ATTRITION

There are several reasons for looking at attrition. First, withdrawls may be seen as reflecting an institution's inability to meet the students' needs, or to assist them in achieving their career goals. Second, withdrawing students are costly, not only because of money lost in training empty seats, but in other administrative costs as well. Third, attrition has human costs. Once a student drops out he is very unlikely to try again; also, instructors' morale cannot help but be affected when the attrition rate is high.

Colleges and universities may adopt **student retention strategies** to reduce the financial waste, and improve their reputation with government and employers. In this case, the human considerations may be secondary. However, the dynamics behind attrition are human, as are effective solutions to attrition problems. An analysis of these factors follows.

ATTRITION: WHY DO STUDENTS DROP OUT

The first thing that becomes obvious when asking why students do not finish their studies, is that there is no one answer. The situations are many and complex. These may range from those relating to the individual to those relating to the institution. Whatever the causes, it has been said that attrition results when *"the fit between the student and the college"* is inadequate (Calder,1989).

Thus, Baker (1986) found that the main **institution related reasons for withdrawal** were inadequate academic advising, inadequate curricular and extracurricular activities, lack of counseling, and conflict between classes and job. Other studies have pointed to the interaction with staff, their perceived lack of interest in the students, or their (poor) instructional skills or methods (Canada, 1982; Koodoo et al, 1984; Marinaccio, 1985; Neumann & Neumann 1989).

On the other hand, there are also **individual characteristics related to attrition.** These may range from personal adjustment problems to unclear career goals. Clagett (1982) found that 60% of all students who have not chosen a major in the fall, will not return in the spring. Caldwell (1989) was able to identify "high risk" students as those who expressed all three of these attitudes: a low confidence that they will graduate in time, a concern over performing under pressure and a desire to upgrade literacy skills. Coincidentally, similar factors were reported by Heinemann (1984) for university students. He found that withdrawing students felt they had less potential, had a difficult time handling exams, and had poor study habits. Other factors were financial problems and loneliness (Marinaccio, 1985; Koodoo et al, 1984; Canada, 1982).

THE SOLUTION: RETENTION STRATEGIES OR "STUDENT SUCCESS PROGRAMS"

The above studies give valuable insight into why students leave post secondary study. They are nonetheless "post mortems": asking what went wrong. Instead, the ultimate goal of attrition research is to find ways to prevent the problem, to keep the students. Retention efforts can and do work, and can reduce attrition to reasonable levels. (Not all attrition is a problem to be solved, a ten per cent (10%) level is acceptable.)

Impressive retention efforts, or **student success programs** are being reported in many institutions. These strategies are based on prevention: the prevention of the aforementioned contributors to attrition.

Some student success programs concentrate on effecting changes to the student's attitudes, others on effecting changes to the institutions. Thus some approaches may integrate compulsory **"student success courses"** into their colleges (e.g. College Survival Inc. courses). On the other hand, others report success by making substantial **changes within the college infrastructure**, supplemented by compulsory student success courses (e.g. Camosun College, Victoria, B.C.).

One particular program attempts a balance between the two. It was developed by Dr. Berry Calder (1989), of Georgian (Community) College in Barrie, Ontario. It's flexibility and relatively low cost (coordinated from student services, and manned primarily by staff and other volunteers) coupled with its effectiveness make it worthy of specific mention.

THE GEORGIAN COLLEGE EXAMPLE

The program takes a common sense approach. Attrition, Calder argues, means that the student is abandoning his or her goals. Thus, any successful retention strategy will help the student maintain or focus on these goals. In order to do this, preventive strategies touch both the **institutional related reasons** and the **student related reasons** for attrition. Thus, changes are effected within the college (including staff involvement with students) and within the students themselves.

The program begins with each student filling out a **Student Goals Inventory.** This is a questionnaire that asks each student about college related goals and activities that are important to them. Each student must then return this to the college before the academic year begins. When it is processed, the College is then able to assess the needs of each student, to identify the potential high risk students, and determine the nature and extent of student services necessary to assure retention of students.

The **Student Success Program** then organizes a number of activities to match the needs expressed by the students with the services and programs provided by the college (or the community). This information is then relayed back to the student, again before the college year begins. Thus, a made to measure "fit between the student and the college" is attempted from the outset.

Examples of specific initiatives may range from simply letting a student know where certain reference material or clubs may be found, to organizing seminars on areas of interest, such as: improving concentration and memory; reading and reviewing; or time management. Also, those students whose needs put them in the "risk" category are enrolled in special tutorial and support group classes from the commencement of the school year. (This is particularly important, as the researchers noted that learning difficulties and poor learning techniques have been on the rise since 1983.)

As a result of these efforts, attrition was cut in half at this college.

CONCLUSION

Students may decide to drop out of college or university for any number of reasons. These may range from personal reasons (financial difficulties etc.) to institutional reasons (poor course content). An effective retention or student success strategy will address the two types of difficulty. Before implementing any such strategy, however, the Department should have a clear idea of the types of reasons that face its withdrawing students.

APPENDIX I, TABLE 1

Enrollments* X College X Category X Year

	Pre-Employment				Technical				Technology			
	86/87	87/88	88/89	89/90	86/87	87/88	88/89	89/90	86/87	87/88	88/89	89/90
Bathurst	282	252	258	259	37	26	23	40	294	222	235	225
Campbellton	215	203	203	200								
Dieppe	82	108	208	206		1	33	92		18	41	42
Edmundston	211	289	164	176	26	19	17	16		21	26	21
Miramichi	148	127	125	126								
Moncton	341	274	297	290	27	14	14	9	567	546	574	514
Saint John	172	205	227	259	4				368	354	361	420
St. Andrews	204	206	195	205								
Woodstock	111	94	82	76	103	96	113	107				
Overall	1,766	1,658	1,759	1,797	197	156	200	224	1,229	1,661	1,237	1,222

(Enrollments in all full-time training programmes over 20 weeks, September starting)*

APPENDIX I, TABLE 2

Leavers* X College X Category X Year

	Pre-Employment				Technical				Technology			
	86/87	87/88	88/89	89/90	86/87	87/88	88/89	89/90	86/87	87/88	88/89	89/90
Bathurst	68	58	65	50	8	4	3	9	80	39	54	74
Campbellton	58	40	40	34								
Dieppe	20	23	40	31			6	12		3	9	9
Edmundston	24	22	24	28	4	3	5	3		2	5	7
Miramichi	45	29	45	29								
Moncton	67	54	64	64	2				139	111	126	117
Saint John	39	63	83	77					119	102	139	153
St. Andrews	40	31	45	35								
Woodstock	31	18	25	25	22	31	28	16				
Overall	392	338	431	373	36	38	42	40	338	257	333	360

(Leavers from all full-time training programmes over 20 weeks, September starting)*

APPENDIX I, TABLE 3

% Leavers* X College X Category X Year

	Pre-Employment				Technical				Technology			
	86/87	87/88	88/89	89/90	86/87	87/88	88/89	89/90	86/87	87/88	88/89	89/90
Bathurst	24.1	23	25.2	19.3	21.6	15.4	13	22.5	27.2	17.6	23	32.9
Campbellton	27	19.7	19.7	17								
Dieppe	24.4	21.3	19.2	15.1			18.2	13		16.7	22	21.4
Edmundston	11.4	11.6	14.6	15.9	15.4	15.8	29.4	18.8		9.5	19.2	33.3
Miramichi	30.4	22.8	36	23								
Moncton	19.7	19.7	21.6	22.1	7.4	0	0	0	24.5	20.3	22	22.8
Saint John	22.7	30.7	36.6	29.7					32.5	28.8	38.5	36.4
St. Andrews	19.6	15.1	23.1	17.1								
Woodstock	27.9	19.2	30.5	32.9	21.4	32.3	24.8	15				
Overall	22.2	20.4	24.5	20.8	18.3	24.4	21	15	27.5	22.1	26.9	29.5

(Leavers from all full-time training programmes over 20 weeks, September starting)*

APPENDIX II

COLUMN SUMMARY OF STUDENT RETENTION/ATTRITION

STUDY (YEAR)	CONTEXT (CC/UNIV.)	TYPE OF RESEARCH	REASONS FOR WITHDRAWAL (PREDICTORS OF ATTRITION)	SUCCESS STRATEGIES
Baker, Ronald 1986	College	Research	- 64.5% of classes were dropped before 2nd week of school. - students with highest success rates were those over 49 years old, foreign students, and those on financial aid. - special programs have lowest withdrawal rate. - part-time instructors have slightly higher rates.	- teachers establish friendly atmosphere and show interest in students. - success could be predicted if a students previous educational achievements and abilities were looked at.
		Literature	Negative Factors: - inadequate academic advising - inadequate curricular offerings - conflict between classes and job - insufficient counselling - inadequate extracurricular activities	Positive Factors: - caring attitude of faculty/staff - high quality teaching - adequate financial aid - student involvement - quality advising
Calder, Berry 1986	College	Research/ Literature	- the withdrawing student is seen as a reflection of the colleges inability to meet the students needs or assist in achieving goals. - money & time is lost when a student withdraws. - withdrawing student can experience peer and group rejection, and frustrated ambitions. - the "degree of fit" a student feels in a college is important. - the gap between college and student needs must be closed. - transition to college is very demanding. - statistics in this college showed that of all new students 40% graduate, 20% take longer, and 40% never graduate. - attrition rate was halved by the success strategies implemented. - high risk students were identified as scoring high on all 3 scales: 1) expecting not to graduate 2) concern over performing under pressure 3) desire to meet/up grade literacy skills	2 inventories are used to obtain information from students on their goals and needs. They can than be used to link students together with similar goals, link students with programs and services, and link staff to staff. Student Goals Inventory (SGI) - student fills out inventory, a computer forms a document on each student with a list of student needs. - high risk students can be identified by 3 items: 1. confidence 2. performance under pressure 3. desire to meet literacy skills Learning Skills Inventory (LSI) - voluntary inventory given to students to group their study and learning habits.

STUDY (YEAR)	CONTEXT (CC/UNIV.)	TYPE OF RESEARCH	REASONS FOR WITHDRAWAL (PREDICTORS OF ATTRITION)	SUCCESS STRATEGIES
Canada, Richard & Others 1982	College	Literature	- poor academic standing - non-involvement in extracurricular activities Reasons for attrition; - lack of interaction with staff - disappointment with program - financial problems - family problems - change in goals - lack of counseling - disappointment of instruction - transfer to another college - full-time employment - personal reasons	
Clagett, Craig A. 1982	College	Research	- 2 in 3 (67%) students in fall classes return in spring. - 2 in 5 (40%) who have not chosen a major return. - students enroled in career programs are most likely to return. - main reasons; transfer, employment demands, and achieved goals. - involvement in extracurricular activities. - 12-14% of students withdraw before end of semester. (less than 8 weeks)	
		Literature	Factors of attrition; - academic standing - college environment - financial factors - motivation - demographic variables - personality variables	
Edwards, Jack E. & L. K. Waters 1982	University	Research	2 predictors of attrition: 1. satisfaction with college 2. first quarter GPA	

STUDY (YEAR)	CONTEXT (CC/UNIV.)	TYPE OF RESEARCH	REASONS FOR WITHDRAWAL (PREDICTORS OF ATTRITION)	SUCCESS STRATEGIES
Heinemann, Allen from 1984	University	Research	Withdrawing students have more adjustment problems; - feel they have less potential - difficult time handling exams - poor study habits - socialized more - lonelier - financial problems	- faculty to establish realistic expectations students. - provide academic skills programs. - educate faculty and students about each others expectations.
Koodoo, Aaron, Winston E. Rampaul & John Didyk 1984	College	Research	- 59% drop out in 2 years. - time, money & energy wasted on withdrawals. Reasons for Withdrawal (school related): - 40.8% lack of interest - 32.7% test failure - 30.6% boredom with courses - 20.4% dislike of teachers - 20.4% dislike of courses Non-school Related; - financial problems - domestic problems	
Marinaccio, James retention; 1985	University	Literature	- retention and attrition result from interactions between student and college. Student Characteristics - previous academic standing was the strongest predictor of attrition - some demographic factors - goals and motivation - financial problems College Characteristics - student involvement - college policies - environment	Noel (1978): steps for increasing - organize a retention steering committee. - determine drop-out rate. - conduct study to find out why students are leaving. - college self-study to find out where they are successful & where improvement is needed. - organize retention task committees - increase faculty/staff awareness - improve recruiting system - provide academic support services - identify students who are likely to drop-out - conduct an exit-interview - have reward system for teaching and counseling

STUDY (YEAR)	CONTEXT (CC/UNIV.)	TYPE OF RESEARCH	REASONS FOR WITHDRAWAL (PREDICTORS OF ATTRITION)	SUCCESS STRATEGIES
Neumann, Yoram & Edith Finaly-Neumann 1989	University	Research/ Literature	- 44 - 60% persistence norm - reasons are not academic for those who withdraw in later years. Predictors of persistence; - student/faculty contact - student involvement - course content	Factors in Retaining Students - improved quality of advising - improved teaching quality - significance of required & elective courses
Opp, Ron & Anita Colby 1986	College	Literature	Internal Factors; - procrastination - unable to ask for help - fear of failure - loneliness - self-doubt - value conflicts - career indecision External Factors; - financial problems - work & class conflicts - housing, roommate & housing problems - family responsibility	3 areas were identified to increase retention: - academic advising - personal career goals - out-of-class faculty interaction To carry out retention programs at-risk students must be identified, so their needs can be met.
Phillips, Larry 1989	College	Research	- no clear goals, objectives or policy directions. - statistical data on student withdrawal is not available. - little research has been done. - services offered depend on the size of the college and whether the students live on or off campus. - financial aid is an important issue.	- goals and objectives could be organized for the Student Services section. - success or failure of retention efforts should be monitored. - research should be done on the topic. - survey students to see if there are problems related to finances and retention. - services not provided by the SRC should be provided by the college. - smaller colleges need increased staff or replacements for the time the teachers are away. - commitments on the topic of retention should be made between staff and administration. - action-orientated retention efforts should be established throughout the colleges.

STUDY (YEAR)	CONTEXT (CC/UNIV.)	TYPE OF RESEARCH	REASONS FOR WITHDRAWAL (PREDICTORS OF ATTRITION)	SUCCESS STRATEGIES
Phillips, Larry (cont.)		Literature	Educational system was divided into 3 phases: Moving In: - when the person first decides to go to college until the first few weeks of attendance. - students are in transition. Moving Through: - when the student has become dedicated to the program. - student must balance learning with other areas of their lives. Moving On: - occurs when the student prepares to leave college.	Retention could be increased in each phase: Moving In: - better recruiting and admission practices, enrollment management, administrative policies and services, and orientation programs. Moving Through: - student and academic services, social programs, faculty development, learning support, and academic management. Moving On: - follow-up surveys, career counselling, course certification, and planning.
Rampaul, Winston, Aaron Koodoo & John Didyk 1983	College	Research	- no significant difference between the education background of the parents of graduates and non-graduates. - graduates had higher education levels than non-graduates.	
Van Allen, Georgio 1988	College	Literature	- retention and attrition result from interactions between the college and the students.	- train counsellors to recruit and give advice properly. - advisers participate in student program and course selection. - business offices should keep office hours which are convenient for all students.
Vancouver Community College 1986	College	Research	- as employment rates improve, attrition rates increase.	- improve recruitment approach to maintain enrolment levels.

STUDY (YEAR)	CONTEXT (CC/UNIV.)	TYPE OF RESEARCH	REASONS FOR WITHDRAWAL (PREDICTORS OF ATTRITION)	SUCCESS STRATEGIES
A Statement of the League for Innovation in the Community College 1987	College	Recommendations		- colleges must have a clear process for student enrolment, ways to monitor their progress, and documentation of their outcomes. - colleges should encourage student/faculty association and college involvement. - services must be designed to allow students to benefit from programs. - programs must assure students ability and success in their field. - programs must coordinate with other educational institutions, and business and industry. - updated technology must be used to increase efficiency and effectiveness of services. - staff development programs must be implemented so that all staff have skills needed to assist students.

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